

# 2026 LOS PADRES NATIONAL FOREST LIGHTNING OPERATIONS GUIDE

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## I. PROTOCOL FOR ACTIVATING THE LIGHTNING GUIDE

- 1) District Duty Officer can but is not mandated to initiate the Lightning Operating Plan (LOP) after confirmed ground strikes.
- 2) When LOP is initiated, the Duty Officer will identify who is the District Lightning Coordinator (DLC).
- 3) Los Padres Communication Center (LPCC) will be notified when the LOP is initiated.
- 4) LPCC will make a special announcement advising the Forest that a District has activated their LOP, assign a command frequency, and restrict radio traffic to emergency traffic only to reduce congestion on the network if necessary. A text message will go out to the Chief Officers.
- 5) LPCC will create an Initial Incident number in WildCAD and title it "District Name" Lightning Plan. Confirmed new fires will get their individual Incident #, identify it as a "Complex" and LPCC will "relate" each of these new incident numbers to the original Lightning Plan Incident #. P5EK5S will be the job code utilized previous to a confirmed fire. The ABC Miscellaneous Job Code will be assigned once there is a confirmed fire.
- 6) All resources assigned to a specific "Lightning Plan" will be committed to the Initial Incident number in *IROC*, but the DLCC can move the resources to any of their incidents that fall within the perimeter of their Lightning Plan.
- 7) Daily, the DLCC will advise LPCC what resources are assigned to what Incident Name/Number. This is primarily done to generate one 209 that identifies all resources committed to the fires that fall under the specific Lightning Plan Complex. By tracking this in WildCAD, it will push like incident information and committed resources to the Irwin portal which will distribute it to the like cells in *the IROC, SIT, 209, EPG, and WFDSS programs and generate one incidents under the complex.*
- 8) A District Lightning Coordination Center (DLCC) will be established by the DLC.
- 9) If two or more Districts have lightning (termed as a multi-district activity) the Duty Officer(s) can coordinate and choose to activate a joint lightning coordination operation and choose to have only one DLCC.

10)The DLCC will be responsible for:

- A. Maintaining a log inclusive of an ICS Form 201, for all activities occurring on the District
- B. Recording Incident Names and legal locations (including latitude and longitude) of all confirmed fires.
- C. Maintaining current status of all resources assigned to the District
- D. The DLCC will have direct control over District resources assigned to the DLP. Any additional resource needs will be identified and placed with LPCC.
- E. Keep LPCC informed of all incident activity.

11)When a District has confirmed lightning activity and/or lightning fires and determines they do not want to activate a District Lightning Plan, LPCC will generate an Initial Incident and perform all off-forest, off-district resource ordering on that incident for the specific district receiving the activity. Each reported/received new start that LPCC receives will not equate to an automatic “high” dispatch response, but LPCC will generate a new incident and notify the District Duty Officer to ascertain what resources they would like to respond to the reported new start. Those resources will be assigned to the specific incident and not the Initial Incident. A 209 will need to be generated for any incident exceeding 100 acers in timber or 300 in grass/brush, *there will be national resource commitment of 72 or more hours, it is a Complex, an assignment of an Incident Management Team, and/or a significant event or change is expected to occur.*

## II. ORGANIZATION

- 1) Each lightning fire will be given an incident name (i.e. Pine Fire, Hurricane Fire). Each fire will require a separate 5100-29 and an individual stat fire and incident number.
- 2) The DLC will make all resource assignments (i.e. overhead, equipment, crews).
- 3) All District resources will be considered committed at the time the LOP is activated. Committed resources will go in and out of service with the DLCC until released and returning to quarters.
- 4) It is the responsibility of the DLC to immediately notify LPCC of all non-committed or released resources.

### **III. DETECTION**

- 1) Following the activation of a DLP, observers will report storm development, direction of travel and severity to the DLCC.
- 2) Fires should be reported directly to the DLCC.
- 3) Order aircraft, crews, equipment, and overhead as needed. All additional resource needs for the LOP will be placed with LPCC.
- 4) When a DLCC requests aerial detection, LPCC will coordinate with the other Districts to determine if they also require a flight over their district and combine the mission.
- 5) LPCC will obtain lightning data intelligence from the Automated Lightning Data System and provide to the districts with activity when requested.

### **IV. REPORTING PROCEDURES**

- 1) Fire reports will include:
  - A. Quarter section
  - B. Section
  - C. Township
  - D. Range
  - E. Lat x long
  - F. Nearest known landmark
- 2) The following information will be given to LPCC by the DLC at 1000 and 1930 hours daily, or as requested:
  - A. General area with storm activity
  - B. Fire Information:
    - Name
    - General Location
    - Legal Description (as described above)
    - Size Class
    - Control Status (current and projected) of all confirmed fires occurring since the last report
  - C. Status update of all previously reported fires
  - D. Special problems or needs

- 3) All new statistical fires need to be reported to LPCC as they occur. LPCC will create an individual Incident in WildCAD and update the status of the incident as it changes in WildCAD (Initial Report, Containment, Control and Out). As status is updated in WildCAD it will push to the iRWIn program which will update WFDSS, 209 and SIT.
- 4) *Any statistical fire exceeding 100 acres in timber, 300 in brush and grass, or has an Incident Management Team assigned will require completion of a 209. When this happens, this specific incident will be un-related in the District Lighting Plan and LPCC will establish a separate WildCAD Incident and assign committed resources specific to this incident. This will push to the iRWIn portal and generate a Resource Order in IROC for new resource order request received for the specific incident. LPCC will coordinate with the DLC and assist in the completion of the initial 209.*
- 5) Any fire 10 acres or greater shall be mapped and entered into InFORM by the responsible District.

## V. SUPPRESSION

### 1) Priorities

- A. Lightning fires occurring in areas receiving little or no rainfall shall have staffing priority with full consideration for highest resource values.
- B. Fires occurring at sub-alpine country will generally be a higher priority if adequate staffing is not available.

### 2) Assignments

- A. When the District is experiencing heavy visitor use within the area of the LOP, consideration to area closures can be discussed with the Resource Officer and District Ranger.
- B. If possible, one FPT, will be assigned to each half of the District. They may be involved with detection activity during active lightning storms. Normally they will not be involved with suppression activities except for initial attack when they are the “closest resource.” In that case, they will be released to their regular duties as soon as possible.
- C. Additional Support Resources or militia personnel will be ordered through LPCC and documented in IROC.
- D. When 2 neighboring Districts are in a Lightning Plan, they can coordinate the “sharing” of resources directly. If a permanent exchange of resources is to take place, LPCC will be engaged in establishing which District gets a specific resource based on Forest priorities.

### 3) Module Response

- A. Engines: remain at station location until assigned by DLC.
- B. Crews: remain at station location until assigned by DLC.
- C. Fire Prevention Technician: notify the DLC of position and remain in radio contact. Move as directed to monitor storm activity.
- D. Aircraft: all aircraft will be ordered through LPCC. The DLC will coordinate use of aircraft between districts with LPCC.

## VI. IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATIONS

### 1) Communication

- A. All key personnel will remain in communications with the DLCC.
- B. Emergency messages will be given priority.
- C. Radio Traffic:
  - i. Keep traffic to a minimum
  - ii. Module leaders will establish initial contact with the DLC.
  - iii. Refrain from using the radio unless an emergency exists, there is a request to provide information, or respond to dispatch, etc.
  - iv. Use assigned tactical frequency between crews, overhead or the DLC as much as possible. LPCC will coordinate with the DLC on assignment of a command frequency.
  - v. Each individual lightning fire Incident Commander (IC) will provide the DLC with the following information upon arrival at the fire:
    - Name of fire
    - Legal Description (following criteria listed above)
    - Size, class
    - Type of fuel (i.e. snag, duff, sage)
    - Estimate time of commitment to the incident, additional resource/supply needs?
    - Directions to fire if additional resources are to be utilized

### 2) Staging Areas

- A. Staging areas may be established at one of the following areas depending on location of storm activity.
  - i. District duty station
  - ii. Battalion duty station
  - iii. Other as assigned by DLC

### 3) Map and Records

- A. All fires will be plotted on Forest map in the DLC. In addition; maps will be produced following annual Regional direction on the recording and mapping of fires.
- B. Each lightning fire Incident Commander will:
  - i. Complete a field 5100-29 upon returning to DLC.
  - ii. Complete crew time report for their crew.
  - iii. Complete Fire Investigation Report 07-5300-5.

### 4) Mobilization

- A. All additional resource requests outside of the LOP will be placed by the DLC to LPCC.
- B. LPCC will process all Resource Order Request utilizing the Initial Incident Number generated that declared the District entered into the LOP. The ABC Miscellaneous fire code will be utilized as the charge code for the incident.
- C. Fires exceeding 100 acres in Timber, 300 acres in brush/grass, or requiring the activation of an Incident Command Team, or are Unified Command will have a separate Resource Order Number processed and have a separate fire code generated as the charge code for the specific incident and be related in WildCAD to the initial incident for the LOP.

### 5) Demobilization

- A. As it becomes apparent that personnel and equipment are no longer needed, demobilization will take place. Resources will be demobed in the following manner:
  - i. A list of resources to be released will be given to the DLC and forwarded to LPCC
    - 1. Resources
    - 2. Estimated time of departure (ETD)
    - 3. Destination
    - 4. Estimated time of arrival (ETA)
- B. Only the Forest Fire Management Officer or Deputy in coordination with LPCC will authorize aircraft releases.
- C. LPCC will take over the tracking of these resources and ensure they are tracked back to their home units.

6) Safety

- A. Prior to fire season, all fire personnel will review Health and Safety Code - Lightning and Thunderstorms, the Incident Response Pocket Guide, and Lightning Activity Levels and Thunderstorm Safety.

<b>VII. CANCELLATION OF LIGHTNING PLAN</b>
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The DLC may terminate the LOP after a 72 hour period has lapsed with no observed ground strikes and all fires on the district are in patrol status. Earlier termination may occur by the DLC if warranted.